professors of art in both of those countries, and contrast this with the sort of patronage afforded by Great Britain to her artists, before they entered on the comparison. Even at the present day the demand for historical art is limited to the moderate views of the royal commission, and an occasional picture for an altar-piece, while the walls, the ceilings, and the corridors of palaces, mansions, halls, public buildings, and churches, remain still unadorned with works of historical art. It is true that decorative painting is in some few instances made use of, but then the question which formed the subject of Mr. Buss's paper arises, may not the blandishments of colour and effect be united with art having a higher aim than would appear to have been thought of in Britain for the last two centuries? The paintings of the Campo Santo at Pisa, and of the Capella Sistina, and the Loggie of the Vatican at Rome, are familiar in name to every ear, and in several modern instances in Germany and France historical and decorative art have also been united. It is most desirable that some attempts of the same kind should be made in England. The ceiling of the Louvre has been painted by French artists of the very highest grade; and the walls, ceilings, and other available spaces of public buildings generally in Paris are adorned in a similar manner, while in England this style of decoration would appear to be unknown. But there is also another important application of historical painting, namely, the external decoration of edifices. For this purpose mosaic, sgrafito, or scratched work, fresco, and oil painting, are all applicable. After exhibiting some views of the decorated front of a house in the market-place of Verona, and describing the great works of art to be seen on the exterior of St. Mark's, at Venice, and in other Italian cities, Mr. Buss proceeded to argue on the absurdity of English artists considering it derogatory to the dignity of their art to engage in what might be termed "sign painting." But three instances of external ornament have come under his notice. One was the office of the *Pictorial Times;* another was a house in Oxford-street, decorated in the Moorish style, after a design by Mr. Owen Jones; and the third was a house in Great Marlborough-street, painted externally with arabesques in fresco, by no less an artist than Francis Rigaud, the Royal Academician. Mr. Wyse mentions in flattering terms the external painting on some houses in Frankfort, and at Munich some similar decorations have been exposed to the effects of the weather for a considerable period without sustaining any injury. Another mode of encouraging historical painting, which is unfortunately generally lost sight of, is to bring art to bear on the general arrangements, both internal and external, of buildings—to unite, in fact, the skill of the painter with that of the architect in the original design.

Mr. Franklin said, in a few well chosen words, that there could be but one opinion as to the applicability of art to all purposes. He regretted that the artists of England should think it derogatory to them to engage in designing for manufactures. According to his view there was nothing too high for art to reach, or too low for art to adorn. The wider the basis of art was made, the higher could the structure be carried.

The chairman said he regarded the paper which they had heard read that evening as highly interesting, not only to English artists, but to the whole sphere of society in general, for the more the fine arts were promoted the greater would be the sources of enjoyment within the reach of all classes of the public. He thought that all the high attempts of art should have some special purpose in view. Such was the case with all the great works of Michael Angelo, Domenichino, and Leonardo da Vinci on the walls and ceilings of the churches and palaces of Italy; and such it was also that constituted the great value of the sculptures of the Parthenon and the other magnificent temples of ancient Greece. He would wish to see English artists influenced more by the love of art than they appeared to be. He concurred fully with what Mr. Buss had stated as to the propriety of the architect and painter being consulted simultaneously about the design of a building, and he could assure that gentleman that members of his (the architect's) profession were most anxious for the painters' aid in their labours. It was, he believed, now the practice at Munich to build some of the large churches devoid of mouldings and all architectural ornaments, and to leave them entirely in the hands of the painter for their decoration. How far such a practice was commendable he would not say, but he mentioned it as a proof that throughout Europe, the feeling in favour of the employment of painting for the purpose of architectural decoration, was on the increase.

A statement of the losses sustained by the institution in the number of its members by death since the last session having been read, Mr. Foggo expressed his gratification at this new feature in their proceedings. He hoped the plan would be followed out, and that in the transactions of the institute which would before long be published, some notice of all deceased artists, whether members of their body or not, would be recorded in a manner calculated to raise the character of artists and the society. He then alluded very eloquently and, better still, very feelingly, to the death of Mr. Henry Shenton, son of the well known engraver, who, although too young to have earned a great reputation, lived long enough to have encountered disappointments. The group which he exhibited at the first exhibition in Westminster Hall possessed a character which but few sculptors could put forth.

The chairman paid a similar tribute to the memory of poor Muller, the landscape painter; and afterwards took occasion to remark on the low state of criticism on the arts in this country. It was most important that artists of eminence should condescend to criticise works of art in all their details. There could be no more wholesome school for young artists than would be afforded by such criticisms, and it was highly desirable that the heads of the profession should endeavour to advance art, not only by their pencil but by their pen.

Mr. Cull read an interesting communication from Mr. H. J. Stanley, dated from Munich, and giving a general review of the present state of art in Germany, with a criticism of the respective styles of all the more distinguished of the German artists; after which a well deserved vote of thanks to the chairman was passed (Mr. Donaldson was more than usually happy), and the meeting adjourned.

THE TIMBER TRADE.

The annual circulars of Churchill and Sim, Warrington, and other firms, afford much useful information on the subject, and suggest various inquiries. It appears, in the first place, that prices have varied considerably throughout the season, and that, while Canadian deals have been upon the advance, Baltic have receded in as great a ratio; "timber," properly so designated, from all quarters, except St. John's, having risen to a high point towards the close of the importation. The stocks on hand of foreign deals and battens are large. There were of deals, in 1845, 852,936 pieces, whereas in 1846, there are 1,024,577 pieces, and of battens there were in 1845, 368,246 pieces, against 499,464 pieces in 1846.

It seems a great question whether the Swedish timber which has taken the place of Quebec red pine is so good as that which it has displaced. Much of it is said to have been used for railway sleepers,—we think unwisely. A large quantity of yellow pine remains on hand.

REDUCTION OF THE DUTIES.

On Tuesday night, Sir Robert Peel announced the promised modification of the duties on foreign timber. He said, "We propose to make ultimately a reduction in the differential duty on foreign timber, so that the duty shall remain after the reduction at 15s. instead of the present amount. I think on hewn timber the duty is now 25s.; we propose to reduce it to 15s. But with the view of insuring to the consumer as great a benefit as possible, the Baltic timber trade partaking now very much of the nature of a monopoly, in consequence of the very great demand for it (the supply being hardly sufficient to meet the demand), we do not propose that the reduction shall be immediate. We propose that from the 5th of April, 1847, the period of the year we think most suitable for making a reduction of duty—we propose that from the 5th of April, 1847, the duty on hewn timber shall be reduced by 5s.; and on the 5th of April, 1848, by another 5s. With respect to sawn timber maintaining the same proportions, the reduction of duty ought to be 6s. on the 5th of April, 1847, and another 6s. on the 5th of April, 1848. With respect to other descriptions of timber, such as masts, spars, &c., he proposed to make a proportionate reduction, but whether or not that reduction might not, with benefit to the consumer, be made immediately—viz., from April 5, 1847, without any more gradual reduction, he did not wish to risk an opinion, not being quite certain whether to ensure the benefit to the consumer, the reduction should be made to extend over two years or not."

The formal resolution stands, "that from and after the 5th of April, 1847, the duties of customs now payable upon the foreign goods undermentioned shall cease and determine, and that in lieu thereof there shall be charged the following duties on such foreign goods on their importation into the United Kingdom, viz.—

	From and after April 5, 1847.	From and after April 5, 1848.
Upon timber and wood goods, not otherwise charged—viz., timber or wood, not being deals, battens, boards, staves, handspikes, oars, lathwood, or other timber or wood sawn, split, or otherwise dressed, except hewn, and not being timber or wood otherwise charged with duty—the load of 50 cubic feet	£. s. d. 1 0 0	£. s. d. 0 15 0
Deals, battens, boards, or other timber, or wood sawn or split, and not otherwise charged with duty—the load of 50 cubic feet	1 6 0	1 0 0
Wood—Planed, or otherwise dressed or prepared for use, and not particularly enumerated or otherwise charged with duty, &c. &c.	0 0 6*	0 0 4*

We are disposed to think the proposition a good one, as it will give opportunity for proper arrangements on the part of both buyers and sellers.

The *Times* says:—"Of the necessity for this reduction it is by this time almost superfluous to speak. The experience of the last three years, which has taught so many lessons, and added so much to the traditions of legislative wisdom, has spoken on this point with remarkable emphasis. The colonial trade has almost doubled under half its former protection, shewing the inverse ratio in which this much vaunted blessing benefits commerce. The price of all kinds of timber is now so high, that we should imagine no writer would be so hardy or so ignorant as to consider it the special duty of the nation to keep up the colonial prices. However it may fare with other interests, there is a greater interest than all at stake—the interest of those many undertakings on which the domestic industry and capital of this country are employed, and on the cheap and successful execution of which our prosperity partly depends. Expanding towns, streets rebuilding, new suburbs for the artisan, new cottages for our labourers, public edifices, railroads, tunnels, bridges, viaducts, stations, shipyards, warehouses, pits, and mines, are all on the increase, and bid fair to increase still more; they all demand every fiscal assistance compatible with the necessities of the state. The infinite branches of one vast speculation stretch over the land, and bind all its inhabitants in one vast community of interests. The least paralysis or check will be felt not by one, but by all. While it is the stern duty of legislative prudence to restrain an ardour or a cupidity which compromises itself and entangles itself beyond its real powers, it is not less the duty of legislative kindness to afford every possible facility for useful, legitimate, and *moderate* enterprise."

Railway Committees.—Mr. Charles Buller, and some other members, advocated in the House of Commons a few nights since the appointment of a standing commission or board to relieve the Commons' committees of the judicial part of the railway business.

New Gas Works are being constructed at Scarborough on an improved plan by Mr. G. Malam, who is both the contractor and inventor.

* Per foot of cubic contents, and further for every 100*l.* value, 10*l.*

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